

I have visited Gitmo three times.

Each time, I asked hard questions about how the men detained there were being treated, how long they would be held there, and what efforts were being made to ensure that the innocent were released. By the third visit, it became very clear that I was getting the run-around.

The truth was that the Administration was adrift in what I call the "fog of law." Guantanamo was built on a legal fiction. The Administration claimed the authority to detain any person it deemed appropriate, to deny that person the protections of U.S. and international law, and to do so indefinitely—so long as that person was held outside U.S. soil.

The claim was extraordinary, and the Administration seemed unconcerned that it was without sound legal parameters to guide its actions.

At Gitmo, the Administration effectively discarded the procedures that we have used for centuries—in civilian and military tribunals alike—to separate the innocent from the guilty and ensure fair punishment for those that deserve it.

Hundreds of men were detained at Guantanamo for years, without access to an independent court in which to argue their innocence, without access to the evidence against them, and without protection of the Geneva Conventions.

These are rights that the United States has long pressed developing countries to adopt, arguing that they are fundamental to any just legal system.

It should be no surprise that the Administration's ad hoc procedures appear to have resulted in the improper detention of many individuals whose only crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or having the wrong name.

The Supreme Court brought the curtain down on the Guantanamo legal fiction in its Hamdan decision.

And now it is time for the Congress to act.

Madam Speaker, the United States is engaged in a long struggle against al Qaeda and other jihadist terror organizations. These groups are successfully exploiting the antipathy that many in the Arab world—and, increasingly, not just the Arab world—feel toward the West, and toward America in particular.

In order to erode al Qaeda's appeal and dry up its recruiting base, we have to win the battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation of would-be terrorists.

Guantanamo has become a liability. The real and perceived injustices occurring there have given our enemies an easy example of our failures and alleged ill intent. The prison is so widely viewed as illegitimate, so plainly inconsistent with America's proud legal traditions; it has become a stinging symbol of our tarnished standing abroad.

Defense Secretary Gates has admitted as much, arguing the facility should be closed because its "taint" would render any trials held there illegitimate in the eyes of the world.

I agree with Secretary Gates. It is time to shut the prison down.

That is why I am proud to introduce, together with my friend and member of the Armed Services Committee Mr. ABERCROMBIE, legislation to require the closing of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Senator FEINSTEIN has introduced a similar bill in the Senate.

The bill requires the President to close the facility within one year of enactment, and gives him a range of choices for dealing with the detainees. These options include transfer to a detainee's country of origin (so long as that country provides certain assurances regarding treatment of the detainee); transfer to a facility in the United States to be tried before military or civilian authorities (like the first 1993 World Trade Center bombers and John Walker Lindh); transfer to a qualified international tribunal; or, if appropriate, outright release.

Make no mistake: this legislation is not about setting terrorists free. Many of those held at Gitmo are the worst of the worst—hard-core haters who cannot be rehabilitated. This legislation is about being true to America's most fundamental values and legal norms.

Closing Guantanamo alone will not heal America's moral black eye. But it is a necessary first step.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH PETERSEN

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life and accomplishments of a great American and one of my constituents, the late Joseph Petersen of the Bronx, New York. I wish to recognize Mr. Petersen for the lifetime he spent in the service of his country as a Tuskegee Airman and I thank his loved ones for the sacrifices they made as well on behalf of this nation.

Mr. Petersen passed in December 2006 at the age of 97. Though he died too soon to see his unit awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest decoration of bravery that Congress can bestow, his life and spirit exemplify the heroism upon which the award was founded. Mr. Petersen and his unit fought gallantly and throughout four years of war they lost almost none of the bombers charged under their protection. Mr. Petersen was a soldier in combat in the truest form, striving against both enemy planes and domestic racism, and the courageous example he set will remain an everlasting inspiration to us all.

Madam Speaker, I join with my colleagues in saluting and honoring the memory of Joseph Petersen and in mourning his passing.

HONORING NEWTOWN HADASSAH

HON. PATRICK J. MURPHY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Newtown, Pennsylvania Chapter of Hadassah on its 20th anniversary. The Newtown Hadassah should be commended for its remarkable efforts as both a women's organization and an advocate for the Jewish community.

Hadassah was founded in 1926 by Henrietta Szold and has since grown immensely in membership. With chapters in all fifty states and Puerto Rico and with more than 300,000

members in the women's Zionist organization, Hadassah has bridged the divides among religions, creeds, races, and political beliefs through its presence in more than thirty countries worldwide.

Its primary focuses are in five areas: health, Jewish growth and community, partnerships with Israel, social action and advocacy, and life skills. Through these different areas Hadassah shows its allegiance to the improvement of society, by all and for all.

The Newtown, Pennsylvania Chapter of Hadassah, founded in 1987, celebrates this year their 20th anniversary. It has more than 500 members and these women work to educate themselves and the community about Judaism and Israel. They help others to understand their connections to history and to life in the United States. The members are active in local Jewish and secular communities and reflect the national and international efforts of the greater Hadassah organization.

Madam Speaker, the Newtown Hadassah has spent the last 20 years showing their devotion to our community, enriching our society and strengthening our values. Today, they are working to usher in a new era of Hadassah's growing membership. It is with great pride that I honor and thank the Newtown Chapter of Hadassah for their tireless work in the past and urge them to continue their great work in the future.

RECOGNIZING CHRISTINA PORRELLO

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly rise to recognize an outstanding individual, Christina Porrello of Kansas City, Missouri, who received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Art, a double major, from William Jewell College, on May 5, 2007.

The commencement ceremony was held at the Mabee Center for Physical education shortly after the graduating class observed the campus tradition of the last walk around the quad at approximately 1:45 p.m.

Christina has been very active in pursuing her degree, while also participating in many Delta Zeta sorority activities. Christina intends to teach art or special education classes. Also, I want to acknowledge the support of her parents, Joe and Sandie Porrello, and her siblings Andrea, Connie Jo and Joe Jr.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in congratulating Christina Porrello on her achievement and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors. It is an honor to represent her in the United States Congress.

RECOGNIZING VANDEN HIGH SCHOOL'S STATE CHAMPION ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM

HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Vanden High School's Academic Decathlon Team for winning the Division II State Academic Decathlon Title.